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The only Source of Moral, Social and Political Regeneration.

A

SERMON:

PREACHED IN THE HALL OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES, ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1847.

BY THE

RT. REV. JOHN HUGHES, D. D.,
BISHOP OF NEW-YORK.

abpa
1797-1864

NEW-YORK:
EDWARD DUNIGAN, 151, FULTON-ST.

MDCCCXLVIII.

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PREFACE.

THOUGH the following Discourse was delivered without much time for preparation, and was printed merely from a reporter's notes, it certainly is worthy of being preserved in some more convenient and permanent form than the columns of a newspaper.

The distinguished author had intended to write out the Discourse himself, but as he has been hindered from doing so by his many duties, it has been thought best, with his permission, to publish it as it originally appeared.

THE PUBLISHER.

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From the Washington Correspondence of the N. Y. Tribune.

WASHINGTON, DEC. 16, 1847.

YOU have already seen several notices of the eloquent sermon preached by Bishop HUGHES at the Capitol, on Sunday last. I trust some of the publishers may issue an authorized version of it in pamphlet form, for preservation. Should any one undertake the task, the following correspondence, which led to its delivery, and which has not yet been published, will be worthy of a place in the pamphlet:

WASHINGTON, DEC. 9, 1847.

TO RIGHT REV. BISHOP HUGHES:

SIR,—The undersigned, Members of Congress, respectfully invite you to preach in the Hall of the House of Representatives, on Sunday morning next, (12th inst.,) at 11 o'clock, unless some other hour of the day may be more agreeable to you.

We are, Right Rev. Sir, your obedient servants,

Of the Senate:

JOHN DAVIS, Massachusetts,
JOHN M. CLAYTON, Delaware,
WILLIAM UPHAM, Vermont,
J. J. CRITTENDEN, Kentucky,
S. A. DOUGLASS, Illinois,
CHESTER ASHLEY, Arkansas,
JOHN P. HALL, New Hampshire,
SAMUEL S. PHELPS, Vermont,
SIMON CAMERON, Pennsylvania,
ALBERT C. GREENE, Rhode Island,
D. S. DICKINSON, New-York,
D. R. ACHESON, Missouri,
E. A. HANNEGAN, Indiana,
J. C. CALHOUN, South Carolina,
LEWIS CASS, Michigan,
THOMAS CORWIN, Ohio,
WILLIE P. MANGUM, North Carolina,
J. A. PEARCE, Maryland,
THOMAS H. BENTON, Missouri,
SIDNEY BREESE, Illinois.

Of the House of Representatives:

John Quincy Adams, Massachusetts,
Joseph Grinnell, Massachusetts,
Washington Hunt, New-York,
J. H. Johnson, New Hampshire,
W. Duer, New-York,
T. Butler King, Georgia,
O. Kellogg, New-York,
J. G. Hampton, New Jersey.
Hugh White, New-York,
R. Toombs, Georgia,
Caleb B. Smith, Indiana,
W. Ballard Preston, Virginia,
Samuel F. Vinton, Ohio,
John Pendleton, Virginia,
John A. McClernand, Illinois,
J. R. Giddings, Ohio,
Willard P. Hall, Missouri,
John Wentworth, Illinois,
D. Wilmot, Pennsylvania,
J. H. Harmanson, Louisiana,
Wm. T. Haskell, Tennessee,
W. R. W. Cobb, Alabama,
James A. Black, South Carolina,
James Dixon, Connecticut,
Linn Boyd, Kentucky,
John M. Botts, Virginia,
D. B. St. John, New-York,
C. J. Ingersoll, Pennsylvania,
James J. Faran, Ohio,
E. Sherrill, New-York,
F. A. Tallmadge, New York.
I. E. Holmes, South Carolina,
E. C. Cabel, Florida.

Washington, 9th Dec., 1847.

It gives me pleasure to place the Hall of the House of Representatives at the service of Bishop Hughes, in conformity with the above invitation. Robert C. Winthrop, Speaker H. R.

This list would have been much longer, but there was not time to present it to the members generally. It embraces, however, the leading men of both parties in both Houses of Congress. It was handed to the Bishop on Thursday evening. The following is his reply:

To Honorable John Quincy Adams,
and other Hon. Members of both Houses of Congress:

Gentlemen,—I have just been favored with your note of yesterday, inviting me to preach in the Hall of the House of Representatives, on Sunday morning next. I do not feel at liberty to decline a compliance with a wish so kindly expressed on your part, and so flattering to me. I have the honor to remain, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

✠ John Hughes, *Bishop of New-York.*

SERMON.

THE portion of the Holy Scriptures which I am about to read, is found in the 20th chapter of St. Matthew, beginning with the 20th verse:

"Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee, with her sons, adoring and asking something of him.

"Who said to her: What wilt thou? She said to him: Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom.

"And Jesus answering, said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to him: we can.

"He saith to them: My chalice indeed you shall drink, but to sit on My right or My left hand, is not Mine to give you, but to them for whom it is prepared by My Father.

"And the ten hearing it, were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

"But Jesus called them to him, and said: You know that the princes of the Gentiles lord it over them; and they that are the greater exercise power upon them.

"It shall not be so among you, but whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister.

"And he that will be first among you, shall be your servant.

"Even as the Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a redemption for many."

It is observed, Christian brethren, as something remarkable, that in all the records which the inspired writers have left us, of the life and the teachings of the Son of God upon earth, there appears to be scarcely one direct allusion to the outward condition of that fallen race, which He came to raise and to re-

deem. Questions of government—questions of social right would seem to have been more urgent then than they are now; and yet we cannot find one solitary principle or precept, having the amelioration of these as the direct object of our Saviour. He did not appear surrounded with the pomp and the pretension of a reformer. He did not, in propounding those doctrines which involve the hope of the world, appeal to the sanction and to the support of public opinion. He did not even sustain his maxims by any lengthened train of reasoning, although He sometimes condescended to illustrate His meaning, by reference to parables and usages familiar to the people; and yet I will not say too much, when I add, that all the amelioration which has taken place in the history of man, and all the elements by which it may still be promoted, are contained in the divine lessons which our blessed Saviour inculcated in reference to another, a brighter and a better world than this. He took occasion to convey one of these lessons from that manifestation of man's nature, which came before Him in the incident recorded by the evangelist, in the passage which I have just read. The poor mother, with the affection and the pardonable ambition natural to the maternal heart, wanted to secure in time a place of distinction for her two sons, who had already attached themselves to His teachings, and were numbered amongst His disciples; and when their application was made known, the ten, by a manifestation of another attribute of fallen human nature, exhibited symptoms of their indignation and jealousy. They were filled, says the text, with in-

dignation at the two. As yet, the true light of Christian faith had not taken effect in their breasts —as yet, their spirits were in the condition of our first parent, when God fashioned him out of the mould of the earth, with all his features and all his corporal faculties ready, but whilst, as yet, the breath of life had not been breathed into him in the character of a living soul. So it was with their spiritual nature; since, notwithstanding the divine teachings, they could not raise their minds above the low distinctions which constituted the object of ambition on the one side, and the object of jealousy and indignation on the other. From this our divine Saviour takes occasion to speak, and in His gentle rebuke, and comprehensive instruction, He touched upon that principle which has ever been, and ever will be, when indulged, the enemy of social happiness, and the enemy of equal just rights in the world. He referred to the nations of the earth, at that time, without rule or restraint, or limitation, of supreme power. He said: You know how they lord it over their subjects; but as for you, (addressing not the future lords of the temporal condition of man, but addressing those who were to be the ministers and the founders of that other and better kingdom, which He came to establish upon earth,)—whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister. Thus He impressed upon his followers the necessity of imposing upon themselves the wholesome restraints of self-denial and humility.

Beloved brethren, it was at quite a late period of the week that I was honored with the invitation,

which I prize so highly, to address you from this place. I had already consented to speak in one of our churches, where my presence would be more natural and more expected; and for that place I had prepared, by reflection, some remarks on a subject which I would not deem suitable, on the present occasion; for I should feel that I corresponded but poorly to a compliment so much to be valued, if I could obtrude upon you any reflections or arguments upon those doctrinal subjects, which to too great an extent, have divided the Christian world.

Allow me then to make some reflections upon *Christianity and its Author, as containing and setting forth the germ of moral, social, and political regeneration in this fallen world of ours.* For, whilst I admit it as true, that our divine Saviour seemed to regard those mighty things which occupy the whole soul of men, even of wise and benevolent men, as if He would do them sufficient justice by leaving, in the language of the inspired text, "the dead to bury the dead," yet I contend that they were by no means unprovided for, in His teachings. The object of His mission upon earth was of a higher and a holier character than the mere settlement of human government. Man had incurred the enmity of his Maker, by disobedience. Man had forfeited the inheritance for which God had originally created him; and Jesus Christ, in fulfilment of the first object of His mission, came as peacemaker between the offended Creator and Supreme Lord, and His rebellious and disobedient creature and subject. But yet, whilst, as it is remarked by a writer on laws, the direct object of Christ appears to have had refe-

rence to another life, it is singular that its indirect consequences seem to constitute the only true ground of hope and of happiness, even in the affairs of this world. And it is in that point of view that I would invite your attentiou to two or three reflections; the first of which will be, the condition of human nature and especially its condition at the period when the Son of God appeared as man—not only to ransom our race by the infinite merits of his atonement and redemption, but also to re-establish and open anew the communication between the immortal soul and God, who is its eternal Author. This was the direct object of His mission: and we are not to doubt that all those things which appear to us so mysterious, so inexplicable, so incomprehensible,—that sometimes we seem to derive rather the elements of scepticism from them—that all those things, in the wise providence of God, are susceptible of explanation, and fall into harmony with the general designs of His providence. The second reflection will be the principles by which that amelioration, wherever it has taken place, has been achieved—and the third, the application of those principles, so far as they have been applied to the mere transitory, social and political condition of mankind. If I speak first, then, of the condition of human nature, I speak from conclusions to which every mind must have come that is familiar with the achievements of man, unaided by the light of divine revelation, and unwarmed in his heart by the love which Jesus Christ brought from heaven, and breathed, as the spirit of life, into that society which was founded on the basis of His doctrine. We

find man accomplishing, in Greece and Rome, what constitute, at this day, objects of our astonishment and admiration; and yet, both in Greece and Rome, with all the superiority of his intellect, we discover him either bowing down to gods, the creatures of this earth, and sometimes of his own hand, or worshipping abstract deities, whose history was made up of vices, the very imitation of which would have corrupted a pure nation, instead of their being models to elevate, by imitation of the virtues that Deity ought to exhibit. And how was all this? It involved a contradiction—and that contradiction still subsists in our nature. It is the contradiction by which human nature is susceptible, under certain circumstances, of such heroic and noble virtues, and by which, on the other hand, it is subject to such degrading and brutifying vices. It is the aspiration, unbounded, of the soul, in which, even in this life, if you watch its course, not all the wealth that earth possesses, can reach the measure of man's avarice; not all the honors, can reach that of his ambition. The origin of this enigma, revelation has made known. But even if revelation had been silent, that which the ancient philosophy of Greece surmised with good reason, becomes manifest, that this humanity, this compound of contradictions, never could have come originally from the hand of an infinitely wise and perfect God, in this condition. There must have been a catastrophe, and revelation comes to teach us what that was; and in order to understand the history of this nature, and the object of the incarnation of the Son of God taking it upon Him for our redemption, we have one key:—that key is man's original revolt

against God's government. It is asked sometimes, by unreflecting minds, who are puzzled by this strange exhibition of our nature, why was it that God left such awful consequences dependent upon the creature, whom He had just formed? The answer is such as we may give, according to the limited measure of our knowledge, for when we speak of God, and of God's dealings with the Universe and its inhabitants, we must speak within the limits of our capacity—we have no measure to comprehend God. Our capacity is limited, and according to that small measure only are we permitted to speak; and whilst we admit still the existence of the mystery, we may present a reasonable solution of the difficulty here suggested. It is this: God is alone the Supreme Governor — the alone eternal, independent, infinite Being. Conceding these attributes, we must admit that, consistently with them, God could not create any being, and especially a rational being, endowed with the attributes of man's spiritual nature, and leave him *independent*, as if he were to be another God.

There is no work of God that is independent of its supreme author, or of His rule, or of His government; and accordingly, though the seasons may have been altered, and the earth deformed in consequence of man's disobedience, we yet trace, as we may, with great gratification, the obedience of all things else to the government of their glorious Creator. If you turn your eyes upon the heavens, you perceive with what regularity the starry host move on their appointed way. Day by day and year by year—for

ever and ever—each twinkling lamp of heaven is in its place—all in the beautiful order which God appointed for their movements. The sun fails not to rise to enlighten and warm the earth at the appointed hour; and not for want of light, but from its excess, when he sheds his effulgence on the earth, these stars seem to hide away. If you turn your eyes to the earth, the seasons—except in the mysterious order in which we have reason to believe that they were changed, when man became a rebel—the seasons themselves come at the period appointed. The earth buds forth its myriads of flowers. The warm summer ripens all that the fertile soil is destined to yield for the sustenance of man. Autumn furnishes the season for gathering its bounties; and repose is again furnished by the winter. If you look upon the ocean, you see the same unvarying obedience to the great Creator. In all material things we see this harmony of passive subjection to the will of Him who called them into being. Man is the only exception to the universal order of obedience. And why is man the exception? Originally, we may say, that man, by the very dignity of his nature, could not yield obedience to God in the way in which it is manifested by irrational material things. Earth and sky present a book in which God has traced, with His own hands, the evidence of His power and the glory of the Creator. But that book does not comprehend itself. Man is necessary to read and interpret its contents. To him—created free, but not independent—God, even in the condition of his innocence, made known the law by which he was to shape his conduct, and admonished him of the penalty

of the violation of that law. If it be said that God might have created man, so as to leave him without the power of rebellion, then, what would have been the consequence ?—That man, with an immortal soul, with reason which can look abroad upon the works of God, and an imagination which can gather to its own chambers the majestic firmament itself, and then measure the distances, and comprehend the movements of the hosts of heaven, with almost god-like faculty, would have been identified with gross material things. He would have been subjected with them to a law of necessity, such as that by which God governs all that is material in the world. If man had been thus created, how could he have rendered unto God homage and worship worthy of either ? The obedience rendered by such a being would have been only like that of the tree which bends to the blast that agitates its branches. Man would then have been reduced to the condition of the puppet strung upon the wire, and not even a mortal occupant of a throne would feel flattered by the mock homage of a machine so arranged that it could not avoid bowing in reverence to his greatness. God has, therefore, made man free, because it was requisite for the dignity of the nature bestowed upon him, that he should render a voluntary homage to the Creator. Being free, he necessarily had the power of disobedience, and there is the key which explains the other mystery—itself indeed mysterious. There is that which accounts for the introduction of evil into the world. Thus disobedience—a reversal of God's order by man's own power, an evil having its origin at the cradle

of our race, and receiving accumulations of guilt and familiarity with depravity in the progress of time—accounts for the condition of mankind. God declared that there should be penalties; and these penalties, as marked in the book of revelation—in the book of Genesis—were so far of the temporal order. Man should die—he should have to toil—and here we have the origin of sickness, and of disappointment, and of deception, and of all the various instrumentalities by which oftentimes sorrow traces our pathway from the cradle to the grave. These are the consequences of man's disobedience. And then God seemed to have withdrawn, as it were, from the rebel—not altogether—for even our first parent beheld, through the tears of his repentance, one bright but as yet feeble ray of hope on the horizon of the distant future; and his posterity in the order of the patriarchs, were by no means forsaken of God. He communicated to them, from time to time, the purposes of His mercy; and he made them, in the first instance, to be the long-lived patriarchs—the rulers of their family and of their posterity—so that the same individual was a teacher of religion, a high priest, and a king. But as their posterity increased, it became necessary to form the scattered families into an aggregate, called a nation. And then God did not leave them, for they were His chosen people. He did not leave them to form, at their own caprice, laws for their social and political government. He communicated their laws. He established their religion. He sent, at intervals, prophets to instruct them, and everything bore with concentrated gaze upon a point of time future, and

upon a person on whose appearance the ransom and redemption of this fallen race were to be accomplished. As for the Gentiles, as the text declares them to have corrupted their way, they went forth, under the law of our nature, by which man is still a social being, destined, by an unconquerable propensity of his heart, to associate with his fellow-creatures. Consequently, social forms of existence were necessary; but they were formed in the absence of divine light, and though reason, so called, was as powerful then as now—although what we term principles of natural justice should have been familiar—yet if you look abroad upon the face of the earth at the period at which our Saviour admonished His apostles, you will find no where this pretended excellence of reason—nowhere that just or humane government, which the very promptings of the natural heart should seem to have dictated; but everywhere the multitude crushed to the earth under the iron-shod hoof of irresponsible, absolute, despotic power.

If, then, as in our day, men sometimes reason against religion, and if they reason with singular acuteness, I will tell them that their reasoning, and the reasoning of those whom they vindicate or follow, is not a specimen of man's intellect before it was taught and illumined by the light which God shed upon the world through the religion of His Divine Son. If you want to know what human reason is capable of in government and religion, or in any of those things upon which reason founds the highest exercise of its powers, go to the period when human reason *alone* swayed the temporal destinies of

mankind, and you will find man in Egypt bowing down to the ox, and worshipping the vegetables of the field, as regards religion;—you will find him, as regards government, not questioning—for he did not dare to question—his reason never aspired to the right of questioning—the arbitrary power which his rulers exercised with so relentless a tyranny. Even Rome itself, with all its pretended freedom, had degenerated into a military despotism. It is in ameliorating this condition of things that the admonition of our Divine Saviour began to have its operation and efficacy. He tells his Apostles for the correction of all this, that those who would be free must begin by imposing restraints upon themselves. He insinuates that there is in the heart of man a natural selfishness; that that selfishness originates in the corrupted sources of his passions, and that He, at least in His own kingdom, would have His followers to restrain selfishness; and, so far from insisting upon pre-eminence, He declares that those who would best serve Him must become first the servants of their fellow-beings. It was in such a condition of the world that our Divine Saviour spoke; and though, as I have said, He did not seem to interfere with the civil governments of this earth—whether they should be monarchies or republics, despotic or aristocratic—He treated not of these questions at all—yet we find in His teachings the germ of all that is great and glorious in the social and political condition of mankind. I do not say that their condition is, even now, what it ought to be,—inasmuch as the Redeemer came, not to alter human nature, but to impart new powers

for restraining its corruption by self-control; He came to infuse a new principle; He came to breathe a new spirit into those who would be guided by His light; and it is from this source that we may derive improvement in the social and political condition of the world.

It was necessary, beloved brethren, that man should be taught by authority. He had not discovered his duties by any appeal to his own breast. Until the appearance of Christ, the selfishness of his nature was the ruling law of his action. The opportunities that presented themselves for the gratification of that selfishness were always greedily seized on; and as for restraint, he knew none. If he questioned his own heart, it imposed no law of self-denial. On the contrary, it prompted him to the indulgence of selfishness —to the gratification of his evil passions. There was, therefore, no restraint, and it was necessary that the authority of God should lay down those rules for the government of human conduct which Christ conveyed in his lessons to his disciples. These laws, whilst calculated to improve and exalt the individual man, were also adapted to the improvement and elevation of his race in their social character. Such was the religion which the Divine Saviour came to teach. He appeared without pomp. His birth was humble and obscure. His lot was equally so. His death was an iniquity in those by whom it was perpetrated. Nevertheless, He was the promised One of the ancient prophets, upon whom the eyes of all antiquity, even from the darkness of paganism, with some faint recollections of primitive tradition, had rested for four

thousand years. His coming was not an event which took the world by surprise. It had been anticipated. It had been shadowed forth in the belief of the patriarchs, and in the religion of the Jewish people—so much so, that his appearance was essential to confirm the truth of the same. They were, so to speak, Christians; but Christians having the object of their hope in the future, whilst we, on the other hand, for nearly two thousand years, have looked backwards with intense gaze upon his sepulchre which the prophet declared should be glorious. He established the evidence of His mission from God, by His miracles; so that man saw that in them was the teaching of their Creator and of their supreme Lord. Let us now ask, what was the sum of the Saviour's teaching? I speak not now of the mysteries which He revealed; nor yet of those doctrines which are the dogmata of faith; but I speak of the moral part of His teaching, which has its foundation in doctrine, whilst both morals and doctrine, to be of authority, must have God for their Author.

Detail would be impossible—but let us direct our attention to one or two principles which the teachings of our Saviour distinctly conveyed, and established as the groundwork from which other consequences in infinite variety of detail may be deduced. One of these principles is that no man upon earth is irresponsible—that although his fellow-creature may not have the right or the power, or the opportunity to call him to account, yet he lives under the universal and watchful eye of his all-seeing God; and whether you refer to his actions, or his words, or the secret

purposes of his inmost heart, there is a witness—a God of infinite justice, to whom he must render a personal and awful account. There is now hope for the fallen race of man—hope, if he will but practically believe this blessed doctrine; for in it the subject and the sovereign, the weak and the strong, the oppressed slave and the despotic master, are equally subject to restraint—to prescription of limits—to a witness; and all know, that according to their obedience and conformity to that standard, will be their own eternal destiny in another world.

Thus, this doctrine teaches in itself the responsibility of man to a law, and a witness that cannot be evaded. You make laws in this hall of supreme temporal power; but then can you make them binding on the consciences of men? Yes, with one condition. If men, before your laws are enacted, have, as a principle in their hearts, the belief that God sanctions authority—that subordination is necessary to society—that subordination cannot be maintained without laws—that there is a higher and holier Law-maker, who gives sanction to your laws—then they will fear to violate your enactments, even when there is no eye of executive justice resting upon them. Where will you place the security and sacredness of legislation, but in this principle of the necessity of account where deception will be utterly impossible? And yet this is the sternest view of the divine teachings of our blessed Saviour; for in other respects, He made all those virtues which constitute at once the happiness of the individual, and contribute to the prosperity of the State—made them sweet and dear to the hearts of

those who were imbued with His spirit and walked in the footsteps of His example. He was the eternal Son of God—He might have chosen the high and honorable posts of the world; but then He knew that humanity had been too long and too deeply crushed not to sympathize with its humblest condition, and He conferred honor on poverty by being born and living in that state, in preference to any other.

We know that love of wealth has been the destruction not merely of the souls of those given up to avarice, but also the cause of destruction and evil to others who stood in the way of its attainment, and accordingly, to counteract this by His example, He chose to be poor and humble. Yet wanted He no dignity to fulfil His mission. If He chose to speak according to the language of human ideas and associations, He was a King—He was an Eternal King, by virtue of His Divine character. But He was, even according to His human form, a lineal descendant of the royal house of David. And yet this King, when He goes forth among His subjects, proclaims that though the birds of the air had their nests, the Son of Man had not whereon to repose His weary head. Yes, injustice existed, and still exists in the world, and injustice so extravagant that His precursor, the Angel of the Wilderness, is the victim of his moral courage, pining in the dungeon until the dancing girl asks his head of a prince of Judah; and even in Judah, where God's law had been established, the petition is no sooner presented than it is complied with, and the head of the Baptist is furnished on a dish, and set forth before the gay assembly. So, also, in the life of Christ, in-

justice places Him on trial, though no crime was imputed, and He also is made the victim of iniquity, at which the heart of man would have revolted, had it not been under the dominion of evil. Even the Roman governor who represented the mistress of the world, pagan though he was, had sufficient natural light to discover the innocence of the prisoner tried before him; but the moment that the question of enmity or friendship to Cæsar was mooted, that moment innocence and justice are all sacrificed to the passion of selfishness, which, once implanted in the human breast cannot be rooted out, or subdued, except by the influence of the example and precepts of our blessed Saviour. If, however, we extend our view further, we behold how these principles began to work gradually in the temporal regeneration of mankind. It was necessary that a power, superior to the fears and the hopes of the great of this world, should be manifested; and accordingly our Redeemer asked no permission of emperors and rulers, to propagate His kingdom; He sought no alliance with the governments of the earth for the protection of His religion; but He took twelve humble men and commissioned them to go forth and preach His Gospel. They diffused His doctrines; and for three centuries, under the iron pressure of paganism, when it thought to extinguish the rising heresy in the blood of its first disciples, that religion struggled on victorious, showing martyrs—heroes for the love of truth,—for the love of God,—for the love of man,—superior to the iniquitous tribunals before which they were condemned, and to the tortures to which oftentimes their tender limbs were subjected. Here was

a new lesson for mankind. Although the ancient philosophers of Greece spoke in pompous phrases of virtue, they exhibited no example; they made no converts; or, if they did, their converts did not believe sufficiently in their doctrine to have ventured so much as the loss of their little finger. The religion of Christ, then, triumphed over the persecution of the pagan emperors, and at last we behold him, who was the heir of the Cæsars, making his reverence, and acknowledging the supremacy of the Christian religion.

Looking back now from the end of the volume towards its commencement, we can find many a page more dazzling than the one which was added on the day of the emperor's conversion; yet it was a wonderful triumph when the doctrines of Jesus Christ beat back those passions of the human heart to such an extent that Constantine, of his own volition, put bounds to the authority which had descended to his hands without limits from his predecessor. Nominal laws, indeed, there were, but they were subject to corrupt interpretation. These laws could be, and had been, overruled by the rescript of the emperor, and the subjects of the once free state had been left without any recognised defence against the inhumanity and cruelty even of a capricious Nero, or a Caligula.

Constantine for the first time, out of reverence to the principles taught by Christ, decreed that the emperor should no longer have power by rescript to overrule the established law of the empire. His successors improved upon that concession. Justinian and Theodosius framed that code, which, however it may be unsuited to the changes which some fourteen hun-

dred years have wrought in the social condition of man, yet exhibited progressive evidences of limitation—spontaneous, voluntary limitation, of what had been until then supreme and boundless authority.—The events which occurred subsequently—the influx of those hardy populations of the North—their rushing down upon the once civilized plains and cities of the falling empire, with all that strange admixture of bravery and barbarism—presented, as it were, a new world of wild passions, to be again softened down and mitigated by the gentle influences of Christianity.—These Northern barbarians burst forth like a deluge, and it was only the principles taught by Jesus Christ, which enabled His followers to preserve for posterity the small and feeble remnants of ancient civilization which have come down to us. Thus was infused into Christian nations the germ of regeneration, because the sacrifices which the general happiness of mankind require from each individual, of what is personal and selfish, of ease, and of distinction, and of dignity, required an adequate motive. Man acts not without motive. The Christian religion supplies the most exalted motive for human action. In vain do you search the writings of heathen philosophers—in vain do you study the splendid recompense of self-satisfaction which so-called philanthropists offer as the reward of virtue, in order to discover an adequate stimulus to virtuous conduct. It is only in the divine morality of the Christian faith, that we are furnished with a worthy motive to a virtuous and holy life. There we are taught that God is our reward—that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him—that He will punish

your injustice towards your brethren—that He has so honored His disciples as to place Himself, as it were, in their stead, declaring, as the beneficent Redeemer of man has declared—"Whatsoever ye do unto one of these little ones, ye do even unto Me!"

I know not, beloved brethren, whether we, in an age which has much to boast of, but which is not yet quite perfect, can form an adequate idea of the importance of this element infused into the human heart—viz.: the love of God for His own sake, and the love of man for the sake of our common Father. But I do know that, apart even from those sterner rules of divine justice and eternal responsibility which religion prescribes, there is infused into the doctrines and teachings of our Saviour a certain power of attraction which wins the heart, so as to make it enamored of the sacrifices by which the world's selfishness has been shamed and abated. Tell me the calamity to which man is subject that has not found a remedy under the impulse of those divine whisperings? Do you speak of age—formerly, in enlightened nations, so neglected? Do you speak of infancy—abandoned by its criminal authors? Do you speak of the horrors of war? Do you speak of the rights of nations, of the sanctity of the first government, the family, and the holiness of domestic law? Have they not all felt the hallowed influence of the religion of peace and love? Where among the ancients do you find public provision for the poor? Where were the hospitals of heathen civilization? Where do you behold houses in which to gather the broken and trampled reeds of human misfortune? Where do you find war regulated by a spirit of humanity? Where do you find a recognition

of the rights of nations, or of individual man? Nowhere. And in vain do you search for any other origin of those blessings than that source from whence they sprang; God, establishing the word of his eternal justice, through the medium of his divine Son, upon the earth, holding man to a just accountability for his crimes, and making virtue so sweet that the very sacrifices which it demands become themselves the recompense of its exercise. Who and where is the legislator that could teach me to rush into the atmosphere of pestilence and death, in order to minister at the bed-side of him who is nothing to me? Where is the legislator, emperor, or president or congress who could induce me to relinquish the pleasure which I might share with others, in order to go forth and sacrifice myself for the relief of others? And yet the law of Christ, while we seem not to speak of it at all, has infused the power by which we have seen man, and, above all, woman, who comprehends this power in all its divine delicacy, devoting, year by year to the service of Jesus Christ, a life which too many others waste in the empty vanities of the world. Nay, more, if you look to the high governments of the world, you will witness the gradual influence of the same power. In England we behold Edward the Confessor, diminishing his own prerogatives and conceding them to the people, who, from these very concessions, were enabled to assume a bolder tone, and demand from his successor their written confirmation. Thus, by the influence of Christianity, you have secured the first great parent-charter of the modern liberties of the Western World. Wherever Christianity has not gone there has been no progress.

Have the emperors of the pagan world abridged their power? Can they exhibit any instance of self-denial akin to those to which I have alluded, as the offspring of Christianity? And why is it, that with such a divine code as that of the Christian religion, Christian nations have not yet attained to the perfection of its virtue? It is because men will not obey that which has been prescribed as the rule of their conduct. It is because they choose to adhere to the side of evil; and were it not for this, it would seem as if Christian nations ought to exhibit again the example and the beauty of that condition of innocence—nay, I should say a condition almost more honorable than the innocence from which they have fallen:—for if there were not those calamities in the world, where could generous virtue find objects for its exercise? If there were not the wounded amongst our race, where would be the opportunity for the good Samaritan to pour in the healing balm? If there were not poor to be cared for, where would be the opportunity to indulge, under Christian influences, the impulses of our heart, that make it so delightful to contribute, and especially when in deep distress, to the consolation of our fellow-beings? Were we to be wisely guided by those rules which are to be deduced from the moral teachings of the Saviour, the earth would seem to be again a Paradise. Then there would be moderation in rulers, because they would know that just in proportion as their power is augmented and is bestowed for a particular purpose, in conformity with divine law, so their responsibility is multiplied. Then the laws would be made in the spirit of Christian justice, and though not always perfect, yet the intention of the

legislator to make them so would be apparent. Then law would have a moral sanction, and obedience would be the dictate not of fear, but of an abiding sense of duty, truth and rectitude. But, beloved brethren, I have dwelt sufficiently, I trust, on this topic, to make it evident that whatever of political liberty is enjoyed by men—whatever increase of popular freedom is discoverable—whatever progress of popular equality is manifest, must all be traced to the influence of the religion of Christ. And in our own country, and under our own government, those blessings being so common, we are likely sometimes to forget them. Who can be so blind as not to perceive the obligations which we owe to the teachings of our Redeemer? Here we have the sublime spectacle of a people at once its own subject and its sovereign! Oh! how important it is that we should act in accordance with the teachings of the Saviour in the text, that he who would be first should be the servant of all! In a country like this, where every man is invested with a portion of the government, how should he be admonished in the exercise of his prerogative, by the reflection that even for the vote which he gives he will have to render an account—not to his constituents alone—that account is sometimes easily settled—but to a just and all-seeing God, who probes his motives to their very depth! In a country like this, in which we have had the benefit of one great man, who approached in the order of social and political excellence as near obedience to the Saviour's precept as man could approach, oh! how important is it that his example should be kept before our mind! And how natural is it to believe that a country for

which God raised up so distinguished, so singular, so unapproachable a public deliverer, is to be worthy of its origin, and that its destiny may become itself the medium of diffusing benedictions upon the whole human race!

At this moment another character in the world's history rises up before my recollection, and the contrast which he presents to him to whom I have just alluded impresses me with a painful interest. On the one hand I behold the deliverer of his country, awaiting her summons, undergoing many sacrifices for her, yet with a modesty and dignity that make his life an example to warriors and statesmen, a kind of solitary biography in the history of the human race—something like the very creation of the world, that can have nothing to compare with it —I see him again in the fulness of his triumph and his renown, bearing his bright and victorious sword, to return its handle to that loved mother whom he had saved, and whose chains he had broken. He cuts off, as far as depended on him, all the prospects that would have been so dazzling to the eye of others. The hour had arrived; his moral triumph is complete. There is an example which should ever be familiar—engraven upon the fleshy tablets of every American heart! On the other hand, I behold a leadership almost similar in its origin, but in its career, how different, and in its end, how disastrous! With the example of General Washington before him, you saw, during a revolution in a European empire, a soldier undistinguished, except by the hidden force of his own genius—without hereditary claims—without any of those early manifestations of singular talent

which should have attracted the eyes of his country, seeking deliverance—but by impulses which I need not describe, springing, as it were, at a single bound, from the soldier's tent to the throne of a hundred kings. On that throne, is it his country that he serves? Is he disposed to minister to others—to abridge the extent of his own power and greatness? No; his career was like the flight of a meteor, astonishing the up-turned eyes of the world; but it was brief as it was brilliant and glaring; and when I behold this same man also resigning his sword and taking leave of his generals, at Fontainbleau—oh! what a contrast to the man who bequeathed to this Republic the legacy of his example, only less valuable than the inheritance of freedom which he won. The European general disappeared from the theatre of his exploits amid the regrets of few, and the censures of many; —his triumphs had been accompanied by the cries, and his downfall was pursued by almost the curses, of the son-less mothers of France, whose growing progeny he had torn from their sides, one after the other, as they became able to bear a weapon of death to the field of contest. I behold him at last in a condition that moves humanity; an eagle as he was, but now, with crushed pinions and broken wings, chained to a solitary rock in the ocean, and left, cruelly left, to expire as no eagle should have been allowed to die. What a contrast between the two, and what stronger exemplification need be adduced to prove to you, that if a man would serve his country, his fellowmen, if he would procure to himself the highest enjoyment of which his own nature is capable, he will be more studious of the comforts, rights and interests

of others, than of his own. And let us all remember that if we would serve our country and our kind, we must seek direction from the source of light and truth; that we must trim our lamp of duty at the sun of righteousness. If we trust to any other guidance, we shall inevitably err, reaping disappointment to ourselves, probably, and inflicting injury on those whom we receive credit for being disposed to serve.

I fear that I have trespassed on your patience; but I have had no means of reckoning how time has passed. Yet every part, almost, of these observations might itself furnish matter for a long discourse. I cannot conclude, however, without making my profound acknowledgments for the kindness which prompted the thought, and the honor conferred upon me in carrying it out, of requesting me, all unprepared as I have been, to address you from this place. Nor can I withhold my sincere acknowledgments for the patient attention with which you have listened to the remarks that I have offered; and now I would breathe a prayer to God, that he will preserve you, and that you, above all, to whom the nation and the world look with so much confidence, may be guided in your deliberations by the Spirit of God—that you may be enlightened where light is necessary, and swayed in your judgment in favor of those decisions which will at once promote the glory of our common Father, and the interests of this great and growing country, whose destinies may exercise hereafter so important an influence upon the nations of the earth.

THE END.